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# Genre Awareness In The Writing Center

Ashok Bhusal

*Eastern Illinois University*

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Genre Awareness in the Writing Center

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(TITLE)

BY

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Ashok Bhusal

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**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

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Master of Arts in English: Rhetoric and Composition

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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

---

2010

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING  
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*Ronna Binns* 7-30-10  
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
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*John Kay* 30 July 2010  
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
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### **Abstract**

This thesis explores how genre theory is represented in writing center scholarship and practice by analyzing tutor training textbooks and also doing a case study of the EIU Writing Center to examine how genre awareness is perceived by writing consultants. This study concludes that increased awareness of genre features should influence the practice of writing consultants and writing centers. Based on the two surveys from my case study, the EIU Writing Center consultants did not appear to have a strong understanding of genre theory since their practicum course (English 5500) and tutor training textbooks have not explicitly provided them with sufficient guidelines on disciplinary genres and/or an introduction to genre theory. My argument is that by explicitly using concepts and principles from genre theory within tutor tutoring training courses and writing center practice, directors of writing centers can provide more effective guidelines to writing consultants on how to work with writers from all disciplines, so writers can respond to their assignments insightfully and extensively.

### **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this project to my fellow consultants at EIU, who allowed me to survey them about their perceptions of genre theory and its implications within a writing center setting.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank EIU faculty and my friends for providing me with support and motivation in the process of preparing this thesis.

I would like to thank Dr. Kory because of your role as a reader on my thesis committee. Your encouragement, constructive suggestions and helpful critique have greatly helped me to prepare my thesis.

I would like to thank Dr. Donna Binns for being a reader on my thesis committee and for your encouragement and constructive suggestion to write a thesis on the inter-connectedness between genre theory and the writing center.

But most of all, I would like to express my gratitude and sincere thanks to my director, Dr. Tim Taylor. Your consistent encouragement, guidance and hard work greatly helped me to shape my project into a productive one. Without your expertise, insight and constructive suggestions, my ideas could not have expanded into this meaningful project.

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## Introduction

My thesis examines how genre theory is emphasized in writing center scholarship and practice by analyzing tutor training textbooks and also using a case study of the EIU Writing Center to look at how genre theory is perceived by writing consultants who are graduate students in English and how increased genre awareness exerts influence on their practice.

I do an analysis of textbooks for a number of important reasons. Most people who staff writing centers across the country are either undergraduates or are a mixture of undergraduates and graduate students, and many writing centers employ students from diverse disciplines. Textbooks used for tutor training impact their practice, and they frame what issues and higher-order concerns are emphasized in writing centers. Essentially, I examine tutor training textbooks to gauge how genre theory is presented, how often genre theory is presented, and at what depth genre theory is emphasized in scholarship that directly influences tutor training courses.

I conduct a case study for similar reasons. Since the practicum course for the EIU Writing Center uses some of standard tutor training textbooks, using surveys and interviews to gauge writing consultants' knowledge of genre theory provides a snapshot of how genre theory is represented not only in scholarship but also in practice.

In the first part of chapter 1, I trace the history of writing centers at the university level in order to see their role, mission, and function. After looking at this historical background, I discuss pedagogical approaches and how they connect to genre theory. In



the second part of chapter one, I provide an overview of genre theory and its connection to the writing center.

For the second chapter of my research, I employ a case study method. Since the practicum course (English 5500) uses influential training books, using surveys and interviews not only measures the genre knowledge of writing consultants but also provides a clear picture of how genre theory is represented in scholarship and practice. First, I analyze the result of my surveys of consultants at EIU about their knowledge of genre theory and how issues about genre might come up in consulting sessions. Second, I describe the training about genre awareness I provided in a staff meeting in late January of 2010. Third, I conclude my case study research by surveying and interviewing consultants partway through the spring semester.

I examine current tutor training textbooks like *Tutoring Writing: A Practical Guide for Conferences* (2001), *A Tutor's Guide: Helping Writers One to One* (2005), *The Longman Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice* (2008), *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors* (2009), and *The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring* (2008). These textbooks have focused on issues such as these: setting the agenda, the history of writing centers, avoiding appropriation, and writing processes. The consultants who were surveyed had completed a tutor-training course using these first four books, and these textbooks that are used in tutor training courses across the country have a significant influence on how sessions run because they outline what issues are to be emphasized. Though these textbooks have dealt with many issues in substantial ways, there is little discussion about the inter-connectedness between genre theory and the writing center.

In Chapter 3, I explore the interconnections among genre theory, writing center theory, writing center pedagogy, and writing center training courses in the context of my findings in Chapter 2. I have concluded that by making genre theory more fundamental to writing center scholarship in the texts that tutors typically read for training courses and thereby introducing student-writers to repetitive features of different types of assignments, writing consultants could help student-writers engage with their work more extensively. I argue that directors of writing centers should apply different methods to make writing consultants aware of genre theory, so they can help writers to respond to their assignments more extensively and insightfully.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTER-CONNECTEDNESS BETWEEN WRITING CENTER AND GENRE THEORY

#### The History of the Writing Center

There are many writing centers in the USA and internationally that support writing. Though all writing centers help improve students' writing, there are many differences in terms of their names, methods, staffing, and foci. However, all can be important parts of university communities.

In the "SLATE (Support for the Learning and Teaching of English)," Muriel Harris depicts writing centers as "existing in a variety of shapes, sizes and settings" ("The Concept"). Peter Carino notes in "Early Writing Centers: Toward a History" that official writing center history presents writing centers as progressive and evolutionary. His article explains that early writing centers were poorly funded, there was limited staffing, and they were typically visited by freshmen and underprepared students (10-11). In this portion of the first chapter, I am going to discuss the history of writing centers, the reasons for their establishment, their pedagogical approaches, and how those approaches connect with genre theory.

The writing center does not appear until the early years of the twentieth century, and centers became more professionalized after the 1960s. American college history shows that writing center work was done before the founding of many writing centers on campuses and universities in the form of conferences and the tutorial settings of the traditional literary society. Rudolph depicts literary societies as the places on campus in which students "owed their allegiance to reason, and in their debates, disputations, and

literary exercises, they imparted a tremendous vitality to the intellectual life of the colleges" (138). There are many similarities between the eighteenth century literary societies and twentieth century writing centers. Since both were guided by students, literary societies went against the principles that put emphasis on rote learning over interaction and discussion (Rudolph 139).

Collaboration is an important aspect of both literary societies and writing centers. Though literary societies did not focus on discussion and interaction, they highlighted the different aspects of writing as writing centers do. Like the writing center, the literary society had been considered as a counter to the university mainly because of its focus on collaboration, which Harris stresses "the antithesis of generic, mass instruction" ("What's up" 31). The difference is that literary societies emanate from extra-curricular activities whereas writing centers come from curricular activities (Rudolph 137).

Writing centers have other historical antecedents as well. In "The Bottom Line: Financial Responsibility," Peggy Jolly relates that historically tutors were poor scholars whose services were financed by the student's family. On other occasions, tutoring was offered by social organizations and honor societies that provided free tutoring for underprepared members after World War II (101). In the 1950s colleges provided free tutoring for veterans and athletes, and this service was mainly paid for by the GI Bill or athletic departments (102). Later on, universities in the 1960s provided tutoring to an influx of low-income and underprepared students, which was the result of open admissions and was funded through university budgets (102).

Because of their different goals, various terms have been used for writing centers—lab or laboratory, clinic, and center—and those terms had different metaphorical

meanings. The earliest writing centers were typically called labs or clinics. In "Early Writing Centers: Toward a History," Carino points out that many writing labs were set up within the context of the classroom. Labs were used as methods rather than sites; they mainly addressed the issues of grammar. They did not provide opportunities to revise and improve students' papers. Later on, relates Bouquet in "'Our Little Secret': A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions," labs worked out of the classroom, and they became an addition to the classroom. They adopted the scientific method of labs as an extension of classrooms (45).

There was a slow change between the 1920s when the writing lab was used as a method of instruction and to the 1940s when it was recognized as a site separate from specific classrooms. Carino relates that Philo Buck used his "laboratory method" at St. Louis high school in 1904. Buck's students used to conference with him during the class time (12). Similar programs were conducted during the next two decades in schools and colleges. Writing labs created places of their own in the 1930s when the State University of Iowa and the University of Minnesota opened up labs completely separate from classrooms. Adah Grandly sees writing labs separate from classrooms in the 1930s and says that "the Minnesota lab was housed in the College of Science, Literature, and the Arts and consisted of a large well-lit room with writing tables and reference books, as well as a smaller anteroom where student and tutor could conduct individual consultations" (quoted in Carino 13).

In the 1940s, the term "lab" sometimes shifted to "clinic," and that term indicated its connection to medicine and psychology. Boquet says that "the autonomous writing lab gained legitimacy through its association with psychological principles" (47). The

University of Denver focused on the “Rogerian non-directive counseling” to strengthen self-esteem of students, to collect biographical data about students to help boost their confidence, and to assist those who were “poor in English largely through accident of environment or education” (Davidson and Sorenson 85). Boquet stresses, “Rogerian nondirective method succeeds in securing the space of the writing lab as sacrosanct, as distinct from the classroom, a space where students should feel secure in their expression of thoughts and ideas, as they should in a therapist office” (48). Eventually, the word “clinic” grew out of favor because it implies students as patients, people who are “sick.” While the term clinic was associated to medical and psychological matters, the term laboratory was connected to scientific ones. In some cases, the term later on became pejorative as the laboratory turned out to be the place to work on grammar, which classroom teachers did not like ( “What Do” 39-40), and because of the arrival of Armed Forces programs, a number of writing labs were set up to help army officers with communication skills. But in the mid- to late 1950s, writing labs and clinics disappeared, and Carino finds this disappearance remarkable, noting “One would think that the post-Sputnik emphasis on American education would have spawned more (writing labs) in the late 1950s and early 1960s” (“Early Writing” 15).

A second cause for the founding of writing centers is “remediation.” Many historical events like World War II and the Civil Rights movement helped change the emphasis of the writing center from the classroom to assisting underprepared writers. As a result of open admissions at many universities, developmental and basic courses grew, and colleges saw an influx of underprepared students. Writing labs helped students with required remedial work, and the intertwining of remediation and proficiency provided the

impetus for many writing centers in the late 1960s and early 70s. The second wave of open admissions began in the 1960s and developed in the late 1970s. For instance, City College of New York's open policies in 1966 came as a result of those people who had not any access to college before. In "Evolution of a Writing Center: 1972-1990," Yahner and Murdick depict open admissions as resulting in changes in socio-economics, race and also "sheer numbers;" the university had to accommodate many students (16).

Quickly after open admissions came the literacy crises of the 1970s. Many centers including Muriel Harris's at Purdue became a place to help those writers with "deficient skills." Some writing centers helped students improve their basic writing, especially through drills and exercises. Some writing centers helped solely with remedial services, and others included such work in consultation with students ("Growing Pains" 1-8). Similarly, Yahner and Murdick find two views about teaching composition in the centers. One view was to improve writing through grammar and other mechanical work, and the next was to perpetuate style and usage and other mechanical concerns (14). Likewise, Bouquet asserts that "the theme of crisis intervention is repeated over and over again in the scant histories written about writing centers during the 1970s, as writing centers were created largely to fix problems that university officials had difficulty even naming, things like increasing enrollment, larger minority populations, and declining literacy (according to the public) skills" (50).

As more and more centers were established, the preferred term became "center." Earlier labs and clinics also used machinery such as headphones and did skill and drill exercises. But later on, writing centers became "the centers of consciousness about writing on campus, a kind of physical locus for the ideas and ideals of college or

university or high school commitment to writing" (North 63). The centers began to now focus more on the conversation between tutors and writers. North articulates that centers are considered "as places whose primary responsibility, whose only reason for being, is to talk to writers" (78).

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) or Writing in the Discipline (WID) programs which began in the early 70s and developed, strengthened the position of writing centers since writing centers presented themselves as committed to helping writers from all disciplines. Due to the influx of students from all disciplines, scholars such as Waldo, Shamoan, and Burns argue that discipline-specific knowledge is essential to effective writing center tutoring sessions since the tutoring is centered around the rhetoric of specific disciplines; they argue that specialist tutors can create a better environment for student-writers to learn discourse strategies in more effective and productive ways since they can ask more appropriate questions because of their familiarity with the discourse. For example, Mark Waldo, in "The Last Best Place for Writing across the Curriculum: The Writing Center," focuses on the need for specialist tutors to assist WAC programs, and he also views that the tutors with a minimum of a bachelor's degree in specific disciplines can only tutor clients from those disciplines (423).

In contrast, scholars who favor generalist tutors argue that tutors should provide opportunities to students outside of their fields; they also view that that interaction can allow writing consultants to provide different feedback from which discipline-specific tutors would contribute. For example, in "Writing Center Ethics," Michael Pemberton relates that the tutors' lack of disciplinary knowledge can benefit student writers; students



get the opportunity to equalize the power relationship in conferences with a tutor because students are in a position to claim some expertise on the subject matter that the writing consultant does not have. Tutors can ask different questions and provide insights to student-writers by asking questions that the student had never thought of despite the fact that the center might have limitations in disciplinary knowledge and conventions. Pemberton in another article titled "Rethinking the WAC/Writing Center Connection" argues that "a writing tutor's unfamiliarity with discourse conventions can be seen as one of his or her greatest strengths" in the sense that he or she cannot dominate the session by imposing his or her expertise in regards to the particular discourse in which the student is writing (452). Similarly, Kenneth Bruffee in "Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind'" emphasizes the importance of peer tutoring in which students become both tutees and tutors and they realize that "writing is a social artifact" (210-11).

### **Staffing and Writing Center Pedagogy**

As Peter Carino says, the origin of the writing center was the classroom laboratory, and later the Minnesota and Iowa labs broke from the classroom, and the Armed Forces English Programs greatly helped in the growth of labs. Over the past century, writing centers have moved from the margins to centers. Because of the earlier emphasis on remediation, the earliest writing centers were staffed by faculty rather than students since writing centers were the outgrowth of the composition classroom (Kelly 12).

According to research surveyed, early writing centers did not typically use undergraduate peer tutors. Carino says, "Grandy's presentation of the lab at Minnesota in the 1930s and discussions of the Denver lab in the 1940s mention the use of graduate students" (18). He demonstrates that tutoring is very different from classroom instruction. Robert Moore in 1950 stresses the need for special training for tutors and argues that "the more resourceful the (tutor) is in suggesting new approaches to old problems, the more quickly does self help become effective" (390). According to 1951 CCCC report, the tutor who is not trained should not be provided a chance to work in the lab ("Early Writing" 18).

Carino asserts the context of teaching done in the writing center is different from the teaching done in the classroom. He notes that it should not be assumed "that any faculty member could work in the lab" (18). He views that there was a need for resourcefulness and flexibility on the part of tutor. Because of the realization that the tutoring done in the writing center is different from the instruction provided in the classroom, and the need for flexibility on the part of the instructor, there was an introduction of peer tutors in the late 1960s and 1970s. Though some centers were set up early before this time, most centers came into existence during these decades.

Kenneth Bruffee had resisted the idea of faculty members working in a writing center context. He found that some students had "difficulty adapting to the traditional or 'normal' conventions of the college classroom" (208). He argues that it is essential to reach those students through peer tutoring to the writing center. This method came as an "alternative to the classroom" (209). In this line of thought, peer tutoring builds up a reciprocal relationship with student writers; tutors teach students and also learn from the

experiences. Sessions focus on interaction and discussion. Similarly, Bouquet stresses, “Peer tutors necessitated the gradual development of a method for training writing lab staff. (Implicit in the rise of this issue is, of course the assumption that faculty would know how to tutor but students would not)” (53). Many articles were published both in *Writing Lab Newsletter* and *Writing Center Journal* about peer tutoring. In “Early Writing Centers: Toward a History,” Carino argues that today’s writing centers need to renounce “some teacherly authority prefigure much that is valued in writing center tutors today” (“Early Writing” 18). Likewise, in the “SLATE (Support for the Learning and Teaching of English),” Muriel Harris says that writing center consultants are collaborators and coaches: “Tutors do not evaluate their students in any way because the tutor’s role is to help students, not to lecture at them or repeat information available from the teacher or textbook. Instead, tutors collaborate with writers in ways that facilitate the process of writers finding their own answers” (“The Concept”).

The growth of writing across the curriculum programs in the 1970s and the social constructionist movement in writing center practice created a context for the application of genre theory to facilitate writers learning the discourse features of their fields. The articles published about peer tutoring stress productive conversations and are more inclined towards the generalist side since these articles focus on talking and interaction and do not argue that the knowledge of discipline-specific discourse for tutors is essential to effective sessions. On the specialist side of the debate, scholars such as Waldo, Shamon, and Burns tout that discipline-specific knowledge provides guidelines for tutors, so they can create the best environment in which they can assist students in learning the discourses of their fields by asking effective questions. In their minds, genre

theory in the writing center setting encourages collaboration between tutors and writers to talk about the culture of a discursive discipline, and it also encourages providing samples for student-writers to reflect upon.

### **Genre Theory and Writing Centers**

The social constructionist movement in composition and rhetoric and writing center theory emphasizes the collaborative and social processes of communicating in students' fields since writers need to be aware of their discourse communities, and tutors should help them learn ways of gaining strategies for shaping disciplinary discourse. Similarly, writing across the curriculum programs positioned the writing center's service to act as a guide to familiarize students with discourse conventions and help them grapple with the varied assignments in the academy.

Many genre theorists have stressed that genre in the past was associated with formal features of the text (Devitt, Bazerman and Berkenkotter). Students were supposed to fit any writing assignment into a certain structure without caring for the reason behind doing so. The classic example of this kind of genre is the five paragraph essay. Students were required to write any writing task in five paragraphs, not six or four, without questioning why they should write exactly five paragraphs. For this reason, some people think that the term "genre" still carries some stigma that it has "a limited vocabulary of stylistic and organizational gestures" (Bazerman 20).

But the concept of genre has developed and is now defined on the basis of its social process. Scholars like Carolyn Miller and Mikhail Bakhtin emphasize the social aspect of genres and the social actions they perform. They stress that communicators

must use socially accepted forms of communication within their fields and discourse communities.

This altered concept of genre proposes that the concept stems from appropriateness and effectiveness, rather than deriving from conventions or traditions. Amy Devitt, in her textbook *Scenes of Writing*, opines that “Genre is the typical rhetorical way of responding to a situation that repeatedly occurs within a scene” (7). She defines a situation as “the rhetorical interaction happening within a scene” involving participants, subjects, settings, and purposes” and a scene as “a place in which communication happens among group of people with some shared objectives” (12). Scenes often have multiple situations within them, and each scene has the following aspects:

- Participants (Who?)
- Subjects to deal with (What?)
- Settings in which they interact (Where?)
- Purposes for their actions (Why?)

Another scholar of genre theory, Irene Clark, focuses on audience, specific context, occasion, and the importance of context in creating meaning. She argues that genre theory “is particularly consistent with the social constructionist privileging of context, audience, and occasion, as well as with speech act theory, which emphasizes the function of language as a way of acting in the world and the importance of context in creating meaning” (9).

Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin in *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communication* talk about the social processes of communicating and the importance of

genre knowledge. For example, in the chapter, “News Value in Scientific Journal Articles,” they stress the need for understanding the conventions and practices within the discourse community of scientists.

An increasing number of WAC /WID programs required writing tutors to assist students to learn discipline-specific discourses. Christina Murphy, in “The Writing Center and Social Constructionist Theory,” advocates for social constructionist theory and emphasizes the importance of guiding student-writers into the culture of their discourse communities. Genre theory provides a way for tutors to help student-writers with strategies for shaping discipline-specific discourse.

### **Genre and Creativity**

There are many people who think genre stifles students’ creativity since it makes them aware of constraints. But the question arises, if students are allowed to write in any way they like, does their writing become more creative and better? Bakhtin finds a solution to the problem. He asserts that “the better our command of genres, the more freely we employ them, the more fully and clearly we reveal our own individuality in them...the more flexibly and precisely we reflect the unrepeatable situation of communication” (80). Similarly, Clark says that “this presumed interrelationship between genre and creativity suggests that in order for any piece of writing to be considered creative; it must retain at least some of the characteristics that make it what it is supposed to be—that is, for student text to be considered a creative academic ‘essay’” (12). Devitt in *Writing Genres* says that “within any genre, there is a great deal of ‘free’ variation” (149). She gives an example of a lab report and says that “the lab report may

seem a relatively rigid genre, yet it does not indicate how the research question will be worded or which apparatus will be described first” (149). Though passive voice is common, sometimes research activities can be depicted by using active voice. It indicates that there is variation with genres, and creativity exists in constraints or boundaries.

## Genre and Audience

Genre theorists propose that instructors have to encourage students to find out the audience and write their assignments according to audience expectations. For example, Devitt says in *Scenes of Writing*, “It is important to remember that, when writing within the different academic scenes, there is always an academic audience, even if this audience is not specified” (457). Similarly, instructors have to encourage writers to read the assignment closely. Devitt explains, “By carefully reading your writing assignments, you gain insight into the nature of the subject you are being asked to write about, why you are being asked to write about it, the kind of role you are being asked to perform as a writer, what your readers will be expecting from your writing, and what sorts of conventions you will be required to follow” (453). Instructors have to encourage students to find out the reasons of their writing, the subject they are talking about, and the participants in these interactions to make them aware of the genre expectations.

In the next two chapters, I will explore the ways genre theory might provide a new vision for practice and writing center scholarship. I will suggest that by providing models and asking effective questions about the culture of a particular genre, both generalists and generalist scholars could initiate discussions about discourse

conventions. The social constructionist movement and the implementation of writing across the curriculum programs encourage writing tutors to highlight collaborative process and the social nature of communicating in students' fields. Regardless, writing center consultants should create an environment in which student-writers can learn different genre features to become familiar with their discourse communities. I will examine the ways writing center directors can train writing consultants to apply genre theory within a writing center setting, so student-writers will be able to respond to their assignments more effectively.



## CHAPTER 2

### GENRE AWARENESS: A CASE STUDY AND EXAMINATION OF TUTOR TRAINING BOOKS

Writing center tutors are trained to focus on the question, “How can I help this person become a better writer and produce a stronger piece of writing?” The job of writing consultants is to foster students’ insights into ways of developing creative and thoughtful responses to academic and professional writing assignments. They assist students in understanding the goals of academic writing, and they create opportunities for students to practice various genres of written discourse in the academy. At most writing centers, the goals are to help students become independent writers, guide them in fostering life-long learning skills, and improve their writing in the present and for the future.

My experience as a writing center consultant and my academic background from graduate level courses in Composition and Rhetoric such as Writing Center Theory and Pedagogy (English 5500), Mentored Teaching of Composition (English 5502), Genre Theory and Pedagogy (English 5011), and History of Rhetoric (English 5011) prepared me to explore the inter-connectedness between writing center theory and practice and genre theory. In this chapter, I provide a case study approach coupled with an analysis of tutor training textbooks. Since the practicum course (English 5500) for EIU Writing Center consultants and other training courses across the nation use one or more of a limited number of training books, using surveys and interviews will not only measure the genre knowledge of a specific group of trained writing consultants but will also provide a useful picture of how genre theory is represented in scholarship and practice.

During the middle of January 2010, I surveyed 10 graduate assistants at EIU who have completed a tutor-training course that used these textbooks: *Tutoring Writing: A Practical Guide for Conferences* (2001), *A Tutor's Guide: Helping Writers One to One* (2005), *The Longman Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice* (2008), and *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors* (2009). These surveys were given to examine writing consultants' understanding of genre theory and their approach to working with genre conventions in consulting sessions. I asked the following questions:

1. What do you know about genre and how do you define it?
2. How often have you talked about genre in consulting sessions?
3. How often have you explicitly used genre features to help students understand their assignments?
4. Do you think genre awareness helps consultants to better understand student writers' assignments? Why or why not?
5. Do you think genre awareness will help student-writers provide more insightful responses to the assignments? Why or why not?

In response to the first question (What do you know about genre and how do you define it?), most of them did not display an understanding of discipline-specific genres outside of those common in the English classes since EIU writing consultants were all English graduate students. Some graduate assistants demonstrated a good understanding of genre theory and pedagogy, some demonstrated a limited grasp of genre, and for some the term was too vague to define. Two out of ten graduate consultants related that they did not have knowledge of genres. They simply expressed their ignorance: for example,

Graduate Assistant A said, “I know very little about genre and genre theory. In fact, I know so little that I won’t even try to define it.”

In contrast, some graduate assistants had a limited understanding of genre since they understood genres in literary terms or as “rhetorical modes,” which are methods of exposition. Three out of ten graduate assistants thought of genres in simply literary terms since they were English majors with a literature emphasis. They simply described genres in regard to literature: fiction, poetry, drama, etc. For example, Graduate Assistant D revealed, “When I see genre, I see comedy, horror etc.” Since he learned the characteristics of comedy and horror in literature class, he defined genre theory only in literary terms.

But two graduate assistants depicted genre as rhetorical modes, which are really methods of exposition. For example, Graduate assistant E said, “genre can be defined as the type of writing being produced. Examples of genre would be persuasive essay, academic essay, narrative essay, and compare and contrast essay.” Amy Devitt opines that since modes were not flexible enough to have room for contextual models of writing, they could not evolve as a functional genre to fulfill the changing needs of community. In *Writing Genres*, Devitt states, “Whether because they were constructed or because they were poorly constructed, the modes have not been able to evolve as a functional genre set today” (121).

However, two graduate assistants described genre in terms of a mix of literary and rhetorical aims. Graduate assistant E said, “Genre is the different styles/ways in and through which a literary work is organized and conveyed: poetry, drama, narrative,

argumentative, informative etc.” Here, the graduate assistant presented literary genres like poetry and drama and rhetorical modes like narrative, argumentative, and informative as genres. Though he illustrated both rhetorical and literary genres, his definition leans towards literary genre as he saw the term as a style to organize a literary work. In the similar vein, Graduate Assistant F summarizes, “Genre can be the type of writing that you are doing, or it can be a type of literature or reading.” Her definition describes genre as both rhetorical and literary though her focus was on literary genre. These graduate assistants’ definitions of genre were limited since they did not explain the term in terms of discipline-specific purpose, scene, situation, function, and audience awareness as Amy Devitt and other genre theorists define the term.

Just one displayed a very good understanding of genre because she related genre in terms of scene, situation, context, and audience expectations; she depicted genre in terms of function. Graduate Assistant F indicated that she got this knowledge in ENG 5011, the Genre Theory and Pedagogy class. She related, “Genre can be defined as writing that occurs in a certain scene in a certain situation, depending on a specific audience of readers and a specific kind of writer.” She also argued that writing center consultants should make writers aware of scene, situation, and audience, so writers can make rhetorical choices about how to best address those elements and better respond to their assignments.

Their responses to the second question (How often have you talked about genre in consulting sessions?) reveal that graduate assistants usually did not talk about genre features during consulting sessions. Since graduate assistants might not have sufficient understanding of genre theory, it is not surprising that they might not have addressed

genre during sessions. In response to the second question, six out of ten consultants answered “no,” one said “yes,” and three said that they had occasionally talked about genre in the consulting sessions.

Similarly, in response to the third question (How have you explicitly used genre features to help students understand their assignments?), nine out of ten consultants answered that they had not used genre features explicitly. One consultant answered that she had sometimes used genre features explicitly by discussing the assignment itself. She said, “Sometimes I discuss what is appropriate given the type of assignment and based on the genre of writing.” Their overall responses also indicate that though there were many samples of genres in the EIU Writing Center, most of them had not utilized those models of genres to help student-writers improve their writing. This means they were not utilizing genre theory by providing samples of particular genres. One of the methods of applying genre theory to a writing center setting is to provide some samples of specific genres and help writers to follow the samples to meet the requirements of the assignments.

Though most graduate assistants had not talked about genre features during sessions, they felt that genre awareness would help them better guide student-writers. Eight out of ten felt genre knowledge helps consultants better understand student-writers’ assignments because tutors can help students properly incorporate the specific features their assignments require. Eight out of ten consultants responded to the fourth question (Do you think genre awareness helps consultants to better understand student writers’ assignments? Why or why not?) by asserting that genre awareness does help. They thought it would provide stronger guidelines to guide student-writers. For example, graduate assistant E related, “genre awareness can give consultants points of reference for

issues to address when working with different types of assignments.” They also felt their genre knowledge makes student-writers able to make sure if the requirements of their assignment are fulfilled. For example, Graduate Assistant F opined that” it enables consultants to make students aware of genre and to check if the requirements of their writing assignment are met.”

However, two graduate assistants responded that it is not necessary for consultants to have the knowledge of genre though they viewed that it is necessary for student-writers to have genre literacy. Graduate Assistant A argued that since the assignment sheets give sufficient information about what and how students are supposed to write, tutors should encourage writers to compose their assignments based on the instructor’s guidelines. She argued that part of a consulting session includes the need to ensure student-writers have an understanding about the genre of the assignment. Likewise, I had observed while working in the EIU writing center that many times teachers provided sufficient information about the assignments, but students often were baffled about the requirements. In those situations, graduate consultants can ask writers to read their assignment sheets, discuss the requirements for the assignments, and improve their papers on the basis of the requirements by also making them aware of genre literacy and features.

Though most tutors did not recall using genre features during sessions, their responses suggest that they realized that genre awareness can help students insightfully respond to their assignments. To respond to the fifth question (Do you think genre awareness will help student-writers provide more insightful responses to the assignments? Why or why not?), nine out of ten consultants answered that genre awareness helps

student-writers provide more insightful responses to the assignments since genre theory provides student-writers guidelines on how to make rhetorical choices. Graduate Assistant A found that the failure of students is because of their lack of understanding of the genre of the assignment. She asserted, "most failures on college-level papers are due to not fully understanding the assignment, either in terms of genre features or not completing all the requirements." Similarly, graduate assistant G thought that genre awareness offers guidelines to student-writers on how they can make rhetorical choices about how to best address issues by properly understanding scene and situation.

After this survey, in a staff meeting in late January of 2010 consisting of the EIU Writing Center director, assistant director, and consultants, I talked about genre theory and its implications within a writing center setting and placed some copies of a handout (Handout, see Appendix) in the EIU Writing Center on how graduate consultants can use genre theory in hopes that they would practice genre theory in the writing center setting. In order to examine the practice and effectiveness of genre theory in the writing center, I took second survey of ten EIU writing center consultants and asked the following questions.

1. What are the common genres you have dealt with while working with student-writers?
2. What are some specific genres of writing you might have had trouble with when working with student-writers? Can you explain in detail the reasons why you might have had trouble with those genres?
3. What are some genres you really have a good idea about? And why is that?

4. Respond to the following statement by circling your degree of agreement or disagreement: knowledge of specific discipline discourse conventions is essential to effective writing center sessions.
- a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Agree
  - e. Strongly agree

In response to question 1 (What are the common genres you have dealt with while working with student-writers?), consultants mentioned research essays, analytical essays, personal statements, scholarship essays, personal narratives, proposals, science reports, article reviews, resumes, compare and contrast essays, movie reviews, argumentative essays, expository essays, and personal essays as the common genres they had dealt with in the writing center. Since these are the common genres that they dealt with in the writing center, and they had written most of those genres in English courses, they had good knowledge about the specific requirements for those genres. They realized that their knowledge about those genres contributed to effective handling of sessions when students failed to fulfill the requirements of those genres because they could provide guidelines to students on how to write those genres.

However, since the EIU Writing Center serves students from outside of the English department, some consultants had difficulties handling sessions when they did not have sufficient discipline-specific knowledge of other genres. To the second question (What are some specific genres of writing you might have had trouble with when



working with student-writers? Can you explain in detail the reasons why you might have had trouble with those genres?), consultants identified lab reports, research papers written for a political science or non-English courses, proposals, and applications. They indicated that since they did not have extensive exposure to those genres, they had a hard time with those genres. For example, Graduate Assistant A mentioned proposals and applications as genres he had had trouble with and offered the reason that “we are fairly engaged in writing mechanics for college papers, but unprepared for the professional writing needed for these.” Their responses indicate a need for graduate assistants to be prepared for many kinds of genres to guide writers.

In response to the third question (What are some genres you really have a good idea about? And why is that? ), consultants mentioned research papers, personal narratives, literary analysis, compare and contrast essays, argumentative essays, response essays, letters of recommendation, personal statements, descriptive essays, analytical essays, scholarship essays, school applications, and personal essays. They stressed the fact that since they had extensive experience in writing those types of documents, they had a good idea about those genres. For example, Graduate Assistant A stated literary analysis and personal essays as the genres he really had a good idea about. He said, “These are what I have the most experience writing myself.” According to 2008 statistics of the EIU writing center, 35% student writers are first year undergraduate students. And most of them came in with the above genres for their required first-year English class. Since the EIU writing center consultants were English majors and all those types of genres were taught in English courses, they had a good understanding of those genres.

In response to the fourth question (Respond to the following statement by circling your degree of agreement or disagreement: knowledge of specific discipline discourse conventions is essential to effective writing center sessions.), only two consultants circled the "Neutral" option, and eight consultants circled the "Agree" option. Although two consultants displayed neutral attitudes on the necessity of knowledge of genre theory for tutors to run effective sessions, they did not deny the fact that it would have been better if they had had some knowledge of genre features.

Having reviewed two surveys, most respondents to my surveys related that they did not use genre theory during sessions though they realized that genre knowledge can help tutors to effectively run sessions, as they can provide effective guidelines on what and how issues should be addressed. In the first survey, two out of ten graduate assistants viewed that genre knowledge is not essential for tutors, but in the second survey, two consultants were neutral and all others agreed that genre knowledge is essential for effective sessions. Their responses suggest that the genres they had had trouble with or they were comfortable with when working with writers stemmed from their exposure to those genres as writers, which points to the need for writing tutors to be prepared through training for all kinds of genres for effective writing center sessions.

While this Writing Center is a specific case where all the consultants were English graduate students, to get a more expansive view of how genre is represented in writing center theory and practice, we need to examine the textbooks that were used in tutor training courses across the country since these textbooks had a significant influence on how sessions run and provide a possible outline of what issues are to be emphasized within courses and within writing centers. To this end, I examined current tutor training

textbooks like *Tutoring Writing: A Practical Guide for Conferences* (2001), *A Tutor's Guide: Helping Writers One to One* (2005), *The Longman Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice* (2008), and *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors* (2009) since these were used as textbooks for the EIU Writing Center practicum course (English 5500). I also examined *The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring* (2008) since it is another possible textbook for tutor training courses. Since there are many issues that are covered in these textbooks, the charts for each book show the distribution of emphases of articles on different issues. In this discussion of textbooks, I will begin with the textbooks that emphasize genre awareness the least and end with ones that emphasize genre the most, so it would be easy to see how extensively (or not) genre theory is represented in tutor training textbooks.

*ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors* (2009) covers global issues versus local issues and problematic students in a substantial manner, but the emphasis on genre awareness is non-existent. The following chart shows the distribution of emphasis on different subject matters.

Issues	Number of articles	Name of writers
Setting the agenda	1	Bruce
Problematic students, ESL/ESL/Gen. 1.5 writers	10	Leki; Tseng; Matsuda and Cox; Ritter and Sandvik; Deckert; Linville; Brauer; Bergmann et al.; Rafoth; Bruce
Research and information literacy	2	Breuch and Clemens; Rafoth
Theoretical constructs/Agendas	1	Tseng

Ethics of the writing center	0	
Administrative and instructional matters	0	
Avoiding Appropriation	3	Matsuda and Cox; Severino; Minett
Global issues versus local issues	6	Severino; Staben and Nordhaus; Ritter and Sandvik; Deckert; Linville; Breuch and Clemens
Plagiarism	1	Bouman
Writing processes	1	Dvorak
Tutoring in different situations and places	0	
History of the writing center and different pedagogical approaches	0	
<b>WAC/WID connections</b>	0	
<b>Genre theory/awareness</b>	0	

Since this book is geared towards ESL writers, all articles offer strategies for helping ESL/ELL/1.5 writers. However, ten articles out of eighteen are solely related to the problems of ESL students and other articles might apply to all students. Global issues versus local issues are presented in six articles. Two articles explore research and information literacy. There is only one article for each of the following subjects: plagiarism, writing processes, theoretical constructs/agenda, and setting the agenda. There are no articles about WAC/ WID connections, ethics of the writing center, administrative and instructional issues, and tutoring in different situations and places. Though some American academic genres are new to ELL writers and many ELL writers major in many disciplines that demand that they work in specific genres that might not work as well in a generalist writing center, it is surprising that this tutor training book designed for guiding ESL students does not incorporate those issues of genre awareness.

Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner's *The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring* (2008)

discusses genre awareness in a very minimal way compared to the extensive coverage of issues like research and information literacy, tutoring in different situations and places, setting the agenda, and global concerns versus local concerns. The following chart shows the distribution of emphasis on different issues in relation to genre awareness.

Issues	Number of articles	Title of articles
Setting the agenda	2	"The Tutoring Process;" "Examining Expectations"
Problematic students, ESL/ELL/Gen. 1.5 writers	1	"Working with ESL Writers"
Research and information literacy	4	Observing in the Writing Center;" "Reflecting on the First Session;" "Interdisciplinary and On-Line Tutoring;" "Writing Center Research"
Theoretical constructs/ Agendas	1	"Writing Centers: Historical and Theoretical Contexts"
Ethics of the writing center	1	"The Tutoring Process"
Administrative and institutional matters	0	
Avoiding Appropriation	0	
Global issues versus local issues	2	"The Tutoring Process;" "Working with ESL Writers"
Plagiarism	0	
Writing processes	2	"The Writing Process;" "Reading in the Writing Center"
Tutoring in different situations and places	3	"The Writing Process;" "Reading in the Writing Center;" "What If..."
History of the writing center and different pedagogical approaches	1	"Writing Centers: Historical and Theoretical Contexts"
<b>WAC/WID connections</b>	1	"Interdisciplinary and On-Line Tutoring" "
<b>Genre theory/awareness</b>	1	"The Tutoring Process"

The book presents many concerns ranging from setting the agenda to genre awareness. Some issues are talked about in extensive ways; four articles discuss research and information literacy, and three articles address the use of different strategies in distinct situations. Some concerns are presented in a minimal way since only one article is written for each of the following concerns: WAC/WID connections, ethics of the writing center, history of the writing center and pedagogical approaches, theoretical constructs and agendas, problematic students/ELL students, and genre awareness. Some issues that are highlighted in other textbooks are not presented at all; there are no articles about administrative issues or plagiarism in the book.

Only one article, "The Tutoring Process," discusses genre awareness, and that discussion is in only one small section under the subtitle "The Tutor Does Not—And Does—Have to Be An Expert." In that section of the article, Gillespie and Lerner relate that there are some times that disciplinary knowledge will be essential. For instance, "a writing tutor who is biology major will have much more knowledge of how to approach writing up scientific data than would someone who's never had to approach that task, and a business major will know more about the specifics of writing a business plan than would a theology major" (27). This statement suggests that though the writers do not strongly stress the importance of discipline specific knowledge, they express their belief that in some circumstances genre knowledge helps tutors handle consulting sessions very effectively. The authors further emphasize, "your goal is still to let writers control their own work, but your expertise in these matters can be quite valuable" (27). They present the tutor's job as creating an environment in which writers control their work. They state that tutors can create this environment by talking and asking different questions to writers

regarding particular topic, and if tutors have knowledge of genre, this can be an advantage to effectively run sessions since they might ask more appropriate questions. In the generalist and specialist debate, their views side with the generalist camp because their overall belief is that tutors do not need to be experts or even somewhat aware of disciplinary genres. This textbook presents genre awareness and genre theory in a minimal level by conforming to the belief that tutors can ask appropriate questions to effectively work with student-writers.

Don McAndrew and Tom Reigstad's *Tutoring Writing: A Practical Guide for Conferences* (2001) has also been one of the most influential books used in tutor training courses in the writing center. Though issues of writing processes, tutoring in different situations and places, and global/local issues are presented in substantial ways in this volume, genre awareness and theoretical constructs/agendas have not been presented in significant ways. Writing processes have been presented in five articles; global issues versus local issues in six articles; tutoring in different situations and places in five articles; genre awareness and research and information literacy in two articles; and setting the agenda, problematic students/ ESL writers, theoretical constructs/agenda, and ethics of the writing center have been presented in only one article. There are no articles on administrative and institutional issues, plagiarism, history of the writing center, and avoiding appropriation.

Issues	Number of articles	Title of articles
Setting the agenda	1	" Lesson from the Masters"
Problematic students, ESL/ELL/Gen. 1.5 writers	1	" Tutoring Different People"
Research and information literacy	2	" Research Supporting Tutoring Writing;"

		“ Tutoring and Technology”
Theoretical constructs/ Agendas	1	“ Lesson from the Masters”
Ethics of the writing center	1	“ What Tutoring Writing Isn’t”
Administrative and institutional matters	2	“ Theories Underpinning Tutoring Writing;” “ Lesson from the Masters”
Avoiding Appropriation	0	
Global issues versus local issues	6	“ What Tutoring Writing Isn’t;” “ The Writing and Tutoring Processes;” “What Tutoring is: Models and Strategies;” “ Tutoring in Different Places;” “ Tutoring Different People;” “ Lesson from the Masters”
Plagiarism	0	
Writing processes	6	“The Writing Process;” “The Tutoring Process;” “ The Writing and Tutoring Processes;” “ Tutoring When the Writer Does not Have a Draft;” “What Tutoring is: Models and Strategies;” “ Lesson from the Masters”
Tutoring in different situations and places	5	“ Tutoring When the Writer Does not Have a Draft;” “ What Tutoring Is: Models and Strategies;” “ Tutoring in Different Places;” “ Tutoring Different People;” “ Lesson from the Masters”
History of the writing center and different pedagogical approaches	0	
<b>WAC/WID connections</b>	0	
<b>Genre theory/awareness</b>	2	“ Theories Underpinning Tutoring Writing;” “ Lesson from the Masters”



So, though many issues like writing processes and tutoring in different situations and places are presented thoroughly, only two articles touch upon issues related to genre awareness. "Theories Underpinning Tutoring Writing" talks about theories like social constructionism, reader response literary theory, talk and writing, collaborative writing, and feminism. Though this article does not explicitly deal with issues related to genre literacy, by talking about social constructivist theory's emphasis that writing is a social act, the article might imply genre theory's focus that writing has a social purpose and different types of writing have different types of functions in the society. The article asserts, "social construction, dialogue, literacy, and learning all interweave during a tutoring session, exemplifying and reinforcing the social constructionist theory that is at the heart of the tutor/writer interaction" (2). Tutors/writers' interaction enables writers to be familiar with the social nature of language, learning, and literacy. Though the article talks about social constructionist theory and its emphasis on writing as a social act that might imply that genre is social concept and writers should be aware of social norms and conventions how particular genres are written for certain audiences, the article is weak in presenting genre awareness.

Similarly, the other article, "Lesson from the Masters," presents the ideas of eight great figures in writing center pedagogy and their contributions to the field—Donald Murray, Peter Elbow, Muriel Harris, Thomas Newkirk, Donald Graves, Nancie Atwell, Roger Garrison, and Walker Gibson. Though the article offers different techniques of helping students, it deals with the issue related to genre literacy in a minimal way. The article relates Walker Gibson's tutorial style of helping writers detach themselves from their work and truly turning them into readers. The article also offers questions Gibson

raises when he tries to make writers aware of readers' expectations: Who is the writer? What's her attitude? And how is this affected by the audience? Since those questions highlight audience expectations, one could say that the article touches upon issues related to genre theory in a minimal way.

The next influential book, *A Tutor's Guide: Helping Writers One to One* (2005) edited by Ben Rafoth, deals with genre awareness to some extent in three articles. Similarly, issues of writing processes are presented in four articles; tutoring in different situations and places is presented in five articles. Likewise, two articles are presented for each of these areas: setting the agenda, problematic students and ESL/ELL writers; plagiarism is presented in only one article. There are no articles on theoretical constructs/agendas, history of the writing center and different pedagogical approaches, ethics of the writing center, administrative instructional matters, and WAC/WID connections.

Issues	Number of articles	Title of Articles
Setting the agenda	2	Setting the Agenda for the Next Thirty Minutes; Recent Developments in Assisting ESL Writers
Problematic students, ESL/ELL/Gen. 1.5 writers	2	Crossing Cultures with International ESL Writers; Recent Developments in Assisting ESL Writers
Research and information literacy	1	Protocols and Process in Online Tutoring
Theoretical constructs/Agendas	0	
Ethics of the writing Center	0	
Administrative and Instructional Matters	0	
Avoiding Appropriation	0	
Global issues versus local issues	1	Protocols and Process in Online Tutoring

Plagiarism	1	Is there Creative Writer in the House
Writing processes	4	Setting the Agenda for the Next thirty Minutes; A Balancing Act of Efficiency and Exploration: Tutoring Writers in Advanced Classes; Organizing Ideas: Focus is the Key; Can You Proofread This?
Tutoring in different situations and places	5	( Non)Meeting of the Minds: A Study in Frustration; Tutoring in Emotionally Charged Sessions; A Balancing Act of Efficiency and Exploration: Tutoring Writers in Advanced Classes; Tutoring in Unfamiliar Subjects; Protocols and Process in Online Tutoring
History of the writing center and different pedagogical approaches	0	
<b>WAC/WID connections</b>	0	
<b>Genre theory/awareness</b>	3	Shifting Gears: Business and Technical Writing; A Balancing Act of Efficiency and Exploration: Tutoring Writers in Advanced Classes; Developing Genre Discourse

Though genre awareness has been presented in three articles, genre theory is not presented in an extensive way. Carol Ellis, in “Developing Student Discourse: Graduate Student Writing,” emphasizes that graduate student writing is a difficult task. Along with the read aloud technique and revision process, the article also argues that students can improve their writing when they understand discipline-specific intentions, but she does

not explain how understanding discipline-specific intentions helps writers to respond to their assignments extensively. The article says, “When a student begins to understand how writing improves, it improves even more when she understands how it interacts with discipline-specific intention” (126). Ellis further adds that to write about a historical event, writers should know what kinds of words and what kind of language are suitable. So, the article presents genre theory in a weak manner.

However, Carol Briam, in “Shifting Gears: Business and Technical Writing,” presents issues related to genre awareness effectively. She stresses that *business writing* and *technical writing* are different shades of the same color; and these terms are used interchangeably with *workplace writing*. The writer discusses the features of business and technical writing: it should be clear and concise; it relies heavily on numbers; it depends on graphics such as tables, charts, and photographs. In a chapter added to the second (2005) edition of Rafoth’s anthology, she suggests that tutors talk to writers about why features that contribute to “clarity and conciseness” are valued by readers of business writing: “Tutors can remind writers that such conciseness and clarity can be a godsend for workplace readers who typically are inundated each day with bulging inboxes, both paper and electronic” (68). By providing guidelines on how to work on writers’ business writing and technical writing, and focusing on the purpose of those genres, the writer stresses the need for genre awareness for tutors in a strong manner.

Likewise, Pavel Zemliansky, in “A Balancing Act of Efficiency and Exploration: Tutoring Writings in Advanced Classes,” stresses that it is essential to ask student-writers for written copies of the assignment. If writers do not have written copies, tutors should create a writing assignment through students’ oral communication. The job of writing

center consultants is to assist their clients in seeing writing as an act of social construction. Zemliansky says, "Writing center tutors can help their clients see writing not as an isolated act aimed only at receiving a grade, but as a contribution to the professional conversation in their field. Tutors can accomplish this by helping writers to identify the immediate audience and context of the paper (usually the class and instructor), as well as the broader purposes, audiences, and implications of the piece" (92).

The writer also stresses that since a tutoring session is an act of collaboration, tutors should ask questions to help students understand their purpose and intended audience for the assignment. He sees that social-constructionist rhetoric provides tutors ways to teach writers during sessions. Social-constructionist rhetoric offers tutors guidelines on how to create an atmosphere in which students can reflect upon social norms and conventions of writing. He further relates that tutors should encourage students to follow discipline-specific features and also to experiment with new techniques, approaches and styles. In this way, by talking about audience awareness, context of the paper, and social-constructionist theory, the writer highlights issues related to genre awareness effectively, though without explicit acknowledgment of genre theorists.

*The Longman Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice* (2008) edited by Robert W. Barnett and Jacob S. Blumner is an anthology of previously published articles that does not deal with the issues of setting the agenda, writing processes, plagiarism, and writing in different situations and places, but genre theory is presented well since there are six articles that focus on the importance of discipline specific knowledge to better handle consulting sessions. The following chart shows the distribution of emphasis in terms of different thematic issues.

Issues	Number of articles	Name of writers
Setting the agenda	0	
Problematic students, ESL/ESL/Gen. 1.5 writers	3	Cooper; Powers; Kilborn
Research and information literacy	6	Hobson; Carino; Harris and Pemberton; Healy; Coogan; Clark
Theoretical constructs and practice/ Agendas	17	North; Lunsford; Hobson; Carino; Riley; Bruffee; Brooks; Shamoon and Burns; Clark and Healy; Kiedaisch and Dinitz; Harris; Trimbur; Murphy; Newkirk; Walker; Posey
Ethics of the writing center	1	Clark and Healy
Administrative and institutional matters	5	Harris; Waldo; Rodis; Simpson; Barnett
Avoiding Appropriation	1	Clark and Healy
Global issues versus local issues	0	
Plagiarism	0	
Writing processes	0	
Tutoring in different situations and places	0	
History of the Writing Center and different pedagogical approaches	5	Cooper; DiPardo; Powers; Neff; Kilborn
<b>WAC/WID connections</b>	6	Wallace; Smith; Waldo; Harris; Pemberton; Murphy and Law
<b>Genre theory/awareness</b>	6	Waldo; Pemberton; Shamoon and Burns; Murphy; Bruffee; Keidaisch and Dinitz

This book deals with many issues ranging from problematic students to genre awareness. Theoretical constructs/agendas are presented in substantial ways as seventeen articles are directly related to this category; WAC/ WID connections, research and

information literacy, and genre awareness are presented in six articles. Similarly, history of the writing center and pedagogical approaches and administrative and institutional matters are presented in five articles. Three articles present issues of problematic students, and subjects like setting the agenda, writing processes, plagiarism, and strategies in different situations and places are not presented at all.

The articles published about peer tutoring highlight productive conversations and are geared towards the generalist side since these articles emphasize talking and interaction rather than knowledge of discipline-specific discourse for effective consulting sessions. For example, Pemberton, in "Rethinking the WAC/Writing Center Connection" (1995), specifically argues that "a writing tutor's unfamiliarity with discourse conventions can be seen as one of his or her greatest strengths" because tutors cannot dominate the session through his or her expertise regarding the particular discourse (452). From this perspective, the tutor's ignorance about discipline-specific knowledge and rhetorical conventions can be interpreted as an equalizing element in the writing center setting in this generalist vein. His point is that both students' authority and tutors' authority on improving students' paper create a balance that allows good conversation between the two. Though Pemberton sees tutors' unfamiliarity with discourse conventions as an advantage for effective communication between tutors and writers, he believes that tutors can make them aware of genre by asking many questions about what rhetorical conventions are used in a particular discipline, and students will articulate them and together they can check their assignments if the conventions are followed. Though this article does not explicitly discuss the importance of genre knowledge for tutors, by talking about tutors' and writers' interaction and collaborative effort to check the

assignments if conventions are followed, his argument implicitly shows the importance of genre theory and encourages tutors to look at genre features in a minimal way.

However, Christina Murphy, in "The Writing Center and Social Constructionist Theory" (1994), discusses social constructionist theory that endorses collaborative learning and collaborative writing. Murphy underlines the necessity of creating the best environment in which student-writers become aware of cultures of their discourse communities that "share 'values, objects of inquiry, research methodologies evidential contexts, persuasion strategies and conventions, forms and formats and conversational forms'" (111). She highlights some features of genre like conventions, forms, formats, and context when dealing with social constructionist theory. Though this article does not explicitly deal with genre features, by talking extensively about constructionist theory, its focus on discourse communities, contexts, and stylistic features, she provides guidelines on the application of genre theory. She does fall on generalist tutors' side as she does not feel tutors must have genre knowledge to effectively run sessions, but she sees the importance of genre theory in the sense that she focuses on the collaboration between tutors and writers in which they discuss features of discourse communities like conventions, contexts, forms, and formats. In this way, though Murphy implies very important features of genres, she does not explicitly present genre features, and her presentation of genre knowledge is shallow.

Similarly, Kenneth A. Bruffee, in "Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind'" (1984), stresses the importance of peer tutoring in which students will have opportunities to become both tutees and tutors and they will comprehend that "writing is a social artifact" (210-11). Though Bruffee advocates for peer tutoring, he does not



ignore the negative effects of peer tutoring such as “conformity,” “anti-intellectualism,” and “intimidation.” To avoid those pitfalls of peer tutoring, Bruffee stresses that tutor training courses should include many articles about peer tutoring that will help for effective peer tutoring. Though this article does not talk about genre theory in an explicit manner, it highlights the issue that writing is a social work of art that might imply the issue that tutors and writers should focus their discussion on finding social norms and conventions about writing particular types of genres. Since the article only states that writing has social norms and values but do not talk about genre features based on social norms and values, the article is weak in the discussion of genre theory. The writer is in favor of generalist tutors as he prefers peer tutoring and effective interaction between tutors and writers.

On the specialist side of the debate, Mark Waldo, in “The Last Best Place for Writing Across the Curriculum: The Writing Center” (1993), emphasizes that discipline-specific knowledge offers guidelines for tutors to run consulting sessions effectively by asking appropriate questions related to the discourse. In contrast to Bruffee’s peer tutoring ideal, Waldo discusses that writing centers should be staffed by professional tutors whose minimum qualifications should be a bachelor’s degree from various disciplines. Waldo strongly argues that tutors who have discipline specific knowledge or genre knowledge can effectively handle sessions by raising effective questions based on genre features. Bruffee, Murphy, and Pemberton do not stress the importance of genre knowledge for tutors but focus on social norms and conventions of writing that can be discussed through productive talk in sessions. In contrast, Waldo advocates for

professional tutors who have strong knowledge about genres because he thinks genre knowledge provides tutors stronger guidelines on how to work with student-writers.

Similarly, Shamoan and Burns, in “A Critique of Pure Tutoring” (1995), advocate for directive tutoring in order to encourage students to imitate the discipline-specific norms and values. They relate, “Directive tutoring is based upon the articulation of rhetorical processes in order to make literate disciplinary practice plain enough to be imitated, practiced, mastered, and questioned” (237). Unlike Bruffee who argues for nondirective or peer tutoring, they strongly favor for directive style of tutoring, so it will be easy for tutors to provide genre features and the format how to organize the particular genre of assignment. The writers express the need for genre knowledge for tutors in the sense that tutors should provide outline for writers how to organize their assignments. They also view that if tutors guide writers with a disciplinary model, this will help writers to master genres by imitating the model. By talking about rhetorical processes of genre and tutors’ responsibility to provide outlines for disciplinary practice, the article strongly presents the importance of genre knowledge for tutors to make writers aware of genre features.

Finally, Keedaisch and Dinitz, in “Look Back and Say ‘So what’: The Limitations of the Generalist Tutor” (1993), note that on many occasions tutors do not need to be specialists since in their writing center 70% of their sessions are papers for composition classes, and these papers are written for a general audience. However they point out that when a paper is for an engineer’s class about environmental issues or a paper is for any class outside of the English discipline, tutors need to be specialists. By asserting the

limitations of generalist tutors, the article strongly shows the importance of discipline-specific genre knowledge for tutors.

By looking at the above articles, we see that there are some important articles related to genre awareness published during the 1990s, and the only important article published before this time is Bruffee's "Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind'" (1984). In this way, reviewing the past decades of writing center-specific scholarship, scholars have generally concentrated on issues such as these: setting the goals, the history of writing centers, writing processes, and avoiding appropriation in tutor training books. In tutor training courses across the country, those who direct writing centers have their undergraduate and/or graduate tutors read articles in tutor training textbooks, and most of these textbooks frame tutoring in a writing center in these important ways, but there is a weak level of discussion about genre theory/awareness and how it relates to writing center *praxis*. Though *The Longman Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice* (2008) talks about genre awareness through six articles on genre awareness and six articles on WAC/WID connections, other recent influential books *Tutoring Writing: A Practical Guide for Conferences* (2001), *The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring* (2008) and *A Tutor's Guide : Helping Writers One to One* (2005) talk about genre theory/literacy in a minimal way, and *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors* (2009) does not address the issue of genre awareness. The work cited pages for the articles also do not exemplify a sophisticated level of genre awareness since they do not explicitly discuss genre theorists such as Devitt, Bazerman, and Berkenkotter and their work. An absence of citation shows that genre theory has not had as much of an

influence within tutor training textbooks as it should have. The effects of tutor training books can also be seen in the tutor practices in the writing center.

Based on present study that used surveys and an analysis of tutor training textbooks, the writing consultants at the EIU Writing Center appear, as a whole, not to have a strong degree of genre awareness and knowledge of genre theory since the Writing Center Practicum (ENG 5500) and subsequent professional development have not explicitly trained them or overtly exposed them to disciplinary genres. The textbooks, and by extension the course, do not have an overt and strong focus on genre awareness. From the surveys, I found that only one out of ten graduate assistants had a good grasp of genre as she discussed genre in terms of scene, situation, function, context, and audience expectation. The writing consultants also revealed that they did not talk about genre features and did not consider helping students by providing some samples of genres. In addition, tutor training textbooks rarely display the importance of genre theory in the writing center setting in a significant manner. Regardless, EIU writing consultants have realized that genre theory can be an effective tool to help students improve their writing as evidenced by their responses to the fifth question of the second survey—eight out of ten consultants agree that discipline-specific genre knowledge helps writing consultants better guide student writers.

## Chapter 3

### Genre Theory: Practical Implications

After examining tutor training textbooks along with doing surveys and interviews of writing consultants from the EIU Writing Center, in this chapter I explore the interconnections among genre-based principles, writing center theory, writing center training courses, and writing center pedagogy. Since the writing center is seen as a place for fostering academic literacy, I argue that using principles and concepts from genre theory within tutor training courses will provide a stronger foundation for discussing many challenges that writers face when they craft responses to assignments and when they visit writing centers.

In Composition and Rhetoric, genre theory/awareness has been examined in regard to Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs for a long time. For example, genre awareness is emphasized in Blumner's "Authority and Initiation: Preparing Students for Discipline-specific Language Conventions" (1999) as well as in Bazerman's *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science* (1988). In writing center studies, there are two widely cited examples, Beemer's "At Your Service: Teaching Rhetoric in a Business School Writing Center" (2005) and Green's "The Writing Center and the Parallel Curriculum" (2004).

But at present, there are only a handful of sustained and detailed studies and scholarly articles that connect genre theory and writing center pedagogy (Walker, Clark, Healy, Waldo). Walker's "The Debate over Generalist and Specialist Tutors: Genre Theory's Contribution" (1998)) and Healy's "Specialists vs. Generalists: Managing the

Writing Center-Learning Center Connection” (1991) also address the issue of whether to staff a writer center with generalist or specialist tutors. More specific to tutor training, however, Elaine Hays’s *The Genres of Tutoring Training: Searching for Reflective Practice* draws on social activity theory and rhetorical genre theory, discusses the tutor training tools used by tutor educators, and examines whether or not reflective practice is incorporated in tutor training.

Likewise, Clark’s “Addressing Genre in the Writing Center” stresses that genre knowledge provides many possibilities for fostering students’ insight into their academic writing since it helps them see writing as a social construction. Soven’s “Curriculum-Based Peer Tutors and WAC,” Mullin’s “Writing Centers and WAC,” and Waldo’s “Demythological Language Difference in the Academy: Establishing Discipline Based Writing Programs” (2004) argue for discipline-based writing tutors. They argue that discipline-based writing consultants can provide useful guidelines to writers about disciplinary genres, and they know how to work with students from particular majors.

However, based on my examination of tutor training books and review of the *Writing Center Journal* and other sources, issues of genre awareness have not been presented in a sufficient manner within writing center studies. Since most writing centers present themselves as working with writers from all disciplines, it is essential to incorporate issues of genre awareness in tutor training books. Only a handful of articles like Waldo’s “Last Best Place for Writing Across the Curriculum: The Writing Center” (1993), Christina Murphy’s “The Writing Center and Social Constructionist Theory” (1994), and Keedaisch and Dinitz’s “Look Back and Say ‘So What’: The Limitations of Generalist Tutor” (1993) are included in tutor training books that overtly deal with the

importance of genre awareness/discipline-specific knowledge. Since writing centers like EIU's have writing consultants only from the English department, concepts and principles from genre theory should be incorporated in tutor training and training courses to fulfill the growing needs of students from all disciplines since the focus on genre literacy in tutor training books and the exploration of genre issues impact tutor training sessions and consulting sessions.

Because most tutor training textbooks deal with issues of genre awareness in a minimal way, 90% (9 out of 10) of EIU writing consultants reported having not used genre theory during sessions even though the EIU Writing Center has some samples of specific genres. On many occasions, instructors provide guidelines to writers on how to write their assignments, so it is effective if generalist tutors guide student-writers towards understanding the features of particular assignments by asking them to read the assignment sheets. Tutors can ask questions to make them understand the purpose, stylistic devices, audience's expectations, and rhetorical elements.

To show the effectiveness of using genre theory and the idea of how tutors can apply genre theory during sessions, I am providing two examples—one session in which the tutor is not focused on genre and another session in which the tutor is sensitive to genre. At first, I am going to provide a conference between a tutor and a writer in which Graduate Consultant A does not have a strong degree of genre awareness, which makes him ineffective in asking appropriate and effective questions that enable the writer to respond to his assignment insightfully.

**Example A**

Tutor: How can I help you, today? What are you working on?

Student: Well, I am supposed to write a lab report. I would like to make sure everything is ok.

Tutor: Can you read your first few lines out loud?

Student: Ok, [He reads the following opening sentences--- When compound 1, compound 2 and L-proline (catalyst) in Ethyl Acetate was refluxed for 30h, compound 3 was formed with 78% yield. The work up only needed washing with brine twice.]

Tutor: Do you think this is the way a lab report should be started with?

Student: Well, I do not know. Maybe not.

Tutor: Can you tell me more about compound 3?

Student: Compound 3 formed hydroborated complex when treated with  $\text{BH}_3$  in THF, and when refluxed with hydroxylamine-o-sulfonic acid, it gave product 4 (40% yield). The crude reaction when acidified with HCl and extracted with Ethyl Acetate gave excess starting material and some byproducts. The aqueous layer was extracted again with EA after making it basic with NaOH.

Tutor: Can you tell me about compound 4 which you have talked about in your second paragraph?

Student: Compound 4 was mixed with compound 6 and stirred overnight that gave imine (intermediate) the reduction of which with sodiumcyanoborohydride led to the formation



of compound 7. The work up required washing with 10%  $\text{NH}_4\text{OH}$  solution after adding some  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$  in reaction, followed by brine wash. The product was purified by column chromatography, Silica.

Tutor: Do you have any questions?

Student: No. Do you think I have everything ok?

Tutor: Well, you can expand on your ideas about compound 3 and compound 4.

Student: I will add some more ideas about compound 3 and compound 4, then. Thank you for your help.

Tutor: You are welcome.

In the above example, since the tutor is not sensitive to features of the genre, the tutor is not successful in enabling the student-writer to respond to the assignment appropriately and effectively. He does not work with the assignment sheet. As shown in my first survey with the EIU tutors, Graduate Assistant A realizes that tutors should always encourage writers to write their papers by following the guidelines of instructors. She sees lack of understanding the assignments resulted in writers' failure and being less engaged with the topic. She asserts, "most failures on college-level papers are due to not fully understanding the assignment, either in terms of genre features or not completing all the requirements." In those circumstances, the job of writing tutors is to encourage writers to read the assignment sheets, to talk to them about the requirements for the papers, and improve their assignments by also making them conscious of genre features.

Similarly, the tutor in Example A did not ask about the purpose and the features of a lab report. Since the tutor is a MA English student and he has dealt with many assignments of English courses in which he has helped students for brainstorming, the tutor is employing the same technique here and asking the student to talk about compound 3 and compound 4, so the student will write more about those compounds. The tutor was not aware that development of content and details are as important in lab reports as other issues like figures, data, equipment, procedures, and results. He does not make the writer aware of audience expectations. He could have asked about the main point or thesis of this assignment though Walker, in "The Debate over Generalist and Specialist Tutors: Genre Theory's Contribution," observed that different professors have different opinions about whether to include a thesis statement or not in a lab report. The tutor does not ask about the result of the lab experiment and analysis of it since he does not know what elements a lab report includes.

Next, I am going to provide one example in which the tutor is conscious of genre, and because of this consciousness he is effective in utilizing genre theory and making students aware of genre features. The tutor is successful in making the student become clear about the features of the assignment and providing guidelines on how to respond to the assignment insightfully. The tutor's sample papers have greatly helped the student to analyze the features of the assignment.

### **Example B**

Tutor: How can I help you, today? What are you working on?

Student: I would like you to look over my lab report and see if everything is ok.

Student: Do you have the assignment sheet with you?

Tutor: Well, I do not have the assignment sheet, but I am supposed to write a lab report on how I synthesized compound 7.

Tutor: What is your lab report about?

Student: My lab report is about the synthesis of compound 7.

Tutor: Who is the audience for this report?

Student: The audience is my advisor and other lab members (all from the Chemistry department).

Tutor: What is the purpose of this report?

Student: The purpose of this assignment is to report to my professor and other lab members the methods of the experiment in class.

Tutor: Does your professor want you to mention the main point somewhere in the beginning?

Student: Well, I do not know exactly. This is the first time I have written a lab report for this class. What do you think?

[The tutor shows two samples of a lab report to a student in which there is a hypothesis in the first paragraph in one sample, and in the other sample there is no hypothesis.]

Tutor: Since your main audience is your professor, you have to ask him whether you are required to include a hypothesis in your lab report.

Student: Ok, I will ask him.

Tutor: Can you tell me a one or two sentence summary of your report?

Student: Compound 7 was synthesized from commercially available starting materials in three steps by the use of condensation, hydroboration, and reductive amination reactions.

[Tutor shows a lab report sample to the student and asks to see and tell about the features of the assignment.]

Tutor: What are the characteristics of this report?

Student: The report has figures, data, equipment, experimental procedure and results. I have also included those features in my report. However I have not included an analysis of results in my report.

Tutor: How have those characteristics fulfilled the purpose of your lab report?

Student: Figures showed the structure of compounds; % yield showed the efficiency of reactions; and materials and methods demonstrated the economic process. All these attributes have fulfilled the purpose of informing how I synthesized compound 7.

Tutor: In what way is a lab report similar or different from other assignments you do?

Student: Other assignments in Chemistry are very different from this.

1) Spectral analysis: Different spectra (Mass, NMR, IR, UV, etc) are provided and students are asked to determine the structure of a compound.

2) Analysis of situation: Chemical happening in a situation is given, and students are asked to use their chemical knowledge to explain the happening (For example, compound A gives compound B in acidic medium but compound A gives compound C in basic medium, WHY?)

Tutor: I think you are clear about the requirements of your lab report. What changes are you going to make next time?

Student: Well, I have to ask my professor whether I have to write the hypothesis of my lab report, then I will analyze the result of my report. I will look over the samples and improve as needed.

Tutor: Ok, thanks.

As shown in the above example, tutors can encourage students to look at assignment sheets and respond to the assignments according to the requirements as writing is embedded in the situation of the course. In the above conference, the tutor has asked about the assignment sheet at first. Although the writer was familiar with most stylistic features of this kind of assignment as he has talked about materials and methods, data, and figures, he has not analyzed the results, which he has to do. By showing the models, the consultant encourages the writer to be aware of the features of a lab report. The tutor also asks about other genres related to or different from a lab report so he will be more conscious of genre features. So the tutor encourages the writer to keep purpose, reader's expectations, and other rhetorical elements in mind, and the tutor has done so because he has a strong conception that written discourse in the disciplines is socially constructed and relies on genres that may not be essays or research papers.

Since EIU Writing Consultants are English MA students, they should be able to provide important guidelines on how to improve students' writing by offering them the requirements of the assignments. My surveys indicate that when the writing is in genres associated with English courses, it is easier for writing consultants to guide student-writers. But since the EIU Writing Center serves students from all disciplines, writing consultants should be aware of the features of discipline-specific genres, so they can ask effective questions and make students aware of the requirements of the assignments. In the second survey of my case study, writing consultants also indicated they had difficulties with the genres like lab reports, research papers written for political science or

non-English courses, and proposals because they were not familiar with the features of those genres.

By making genre theory more integral to writing center scholarship in the texts that tutors typically read for training courses and fully integrating genre theory into tutor training courses, directors of writing centers could introduce tutors to the repetitive features of different types of assignments, which in turn will help writing consultants make student-writers engage with their work more insightfully. As I have shown in my analytical review of tutor training textbooks, writing centers have focused so much on other important issues to good end like setting the agenda, writing processes, research and information literacy, and global issues versus local issues but writing centers should more forcefully encourage tutors to have the knowledge of varied genres and see whether the requirements of the genre are fulfilled or the purpose of the genre has been met in different phases of writing. Based on my findings from the case study and the analytical review of textbooks, it is necessary to more overtly train writing center consultants in genre theory/literacy at writing centers staffed by English majors or writing centers that do not have a great deal of diversity in regard to majors. In my case study, most respondents said that they did not apply genre theory during consulting sessions though they came to realize that genre-specific knowledge can help tutors to effectively run sessions. Their responses indicate that the genres they have had trouble with stem from their lack of exposure to those genres. That's why knowledge of discipline-specific discourse conventions helps tutors run more effective writing center sessions.

The 1990s was an important period in which some important articles that can help tutors become aware of genre theory were published. Articles like Christina Murphy's

“ The Writing Center and Social Constructionist Theory” (1994), Walker’s “ The Debate over Generalist and Specialist Tutors: Genre Theory’s Contribution” (1998), which is not included in tutor training textbooks, and Keedaisch and Dinitz’s “ Look Back and Say ‘So What’: The Limitations of the Generalist Tutor” (1993) should be incorporated in tutor training courses, so they offer a platform for tutors to discuss genre theory and its implications in the writing center. Since Murphy’s article deals with issues of genre like stylistic conventions, context, and discourse communities very well, the article can be incorporated in tutor training courses to make tutors aware of genre.

Similarly, since Walker’s article talks about the concept of genre theory and audience awareness and tries to make tutors aware of genres outside of the English discipline, her article could be incorporated in tutor training courses to discuss issues of audience expectations and genre theory. This article highlights the issue that “Tutors need to understand that different professors might have different expectations” (36) for the same assignments. She relates that she prepared a list of characteristics of lab reports from her introductory lab course. But she found different responses from different professors about the characteristics of a lab report. For example, when asked about including definitions in the introductions to their lab reports, Walker found three different responses from three different professors to the lab reports. One professor recommended not defining trivial things. Another professor said that it should be defined if a report incorporates a lot of equipment or if it has not been defined previously in other lab reports. The third professor wanted not to define equipment and terms overtly.

Walker also found three diverse views from three different professors in regards to including thesis statements in the lab reports. One professor said that he wanted to see

a thesis statement about what they would study in the lab. The other professor viewed that a thesis statement is hard to grasp and it diverts the attention of the readers and that students should state the report's organization. The third professor suggested that a thesis statement should be included dependent on situations. For him, if the report is short, an overt thesis statement might not be essential because headings show the report's structure. This demonstrates the differing responses and expectations of different professors. Walker's point is that tutors in the writing center should aid student-writers by asking them about their professor's expectations and encourage them to satisfy the requirements of their assignments.

Another important article that can be included in tutor training course to encourage tutors to be aware of genre is Keedaisch and Dinitz's "Look Back and Say 'So what': The Limitations of the Generalist Tutor" (1993), which stresses the need for tutors to have specific knowledge of disciplinary based genres. They point out that when a paper expresses an engineer's position about an environment issue, tutors need knowledge of that discipline. They point out that in 30% of cases, tutors deal with students taking courses outside of the English discipline, and for effective sessions, tutors must gain knowledge about discipline-specific genres. This means writing centers like EIU's should be aware of diverse genres from all disciplines since EIU tutors do not look over the papers written only for a general audience but also for a special audience. Though this article does not talk about genre features overtly, it shows the situation that generalist tutors are in. They work with students from different disciplines sometimes without having discipline-based genre knowledge, so the article tries to encourage tutors to be aware of disciplinary genre features.



Along with including articles that deal with genre concepts and principles in tutor training courses, writer center directors should be concerned about a number of issues to assist generalist tutors (like EIU tutors) in being sensitive to the requirements of genres. Writing center directors should communicate with experienced instructors within the diverse disciplines at their colleges. The directors should also collect some samples from each and every department about particular genres and offer models for tutors to employ along with their knowledge about the discipline. They can also ask tutors to interview faculty and collect samples from each department about varied genres. Writing center directors and administrators should organize staff meetings to focus on discipline-specific features. In those meetings the models collected from many departments can be used as tools for discussion. Like Walker says in "Debate over Generalist and Specialist Tutors: Genre Theory's Contribution" (1998), "Writing center administrators can tape-record interviews with faculty or otherwise document the conversations so that all tutors can learn about discipline-specific genre features" (36).

Likewise, writing center directors should assign tutors to write "observation memos" in which one writing consultant observes another writing center colleague's session. In this memorandum, the observer should describe what specific tactics and strategies the tutor used, what kinds of questions he or she asked, how appropriate the questions were to make the writer aware of the genre, and how effectively the tutor made the writer become clear about the requirements of the assignments. The observer should then offer recommendation to the tutor and share his/her perceptions about the implementation of genre theory. In the EIU Writing Center, tutors are required to write two observations memos. They can observe sessions and write about specific moves,

tactics, and strategies they learned from watching, and they can offer one or two recommendations if they have any. This kind of assignment can be utilized as a tool to discuss genre theory and its implication in the writing center.

Similarly, writing center directors can make tutors aware of genre by designing an assignment in which they just go out and find genres and discuss their features in class. In the EIU Writing Practicum (English 5500) course one member of the class each week finds a reading from a resource (electric or print) that is relevant to work one does as a tutor. One can locate appropriate articles from tutor training textbooks or from academic journals like *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, *The Writing Center Journal*, and *College Composition and Communication*.

By providing samples of genres, by asking tutors to collect samples of genres from the concerned departments and professors, and by observing the features of different genres through a search and share activity, directors can encourage tutors to be aware of the discrete features of a genre. Writing consultants can use models as tools to discuss discourse conventions about genres when consulting with student-writers from different disciplines. They can ask appropriate questions related to the writing situation of the course if they are trained by writing center directors about how to consult students from all disciplines including English. In writing centers like the one that was the focus of this case study, tutors must learn many strategies to handle sessions with students outside of the English Department. Genre theory provides many guidelines to handle effective sessions. The following guidelines can help tutors run sessions effectively by enabling the writer to respond to his or her assignment more extensively.

1. Find out the writing situation. Make certain that students are conscious of the situation and how it affects the type of writing you expect.
2. Assist students in finding out how the writing is embedded in the situation of their course
3. Provide models so that students will be able to know how to interpret the writing task in relation to the situation. While reviewing the examples, focus not only on form but also other elements that respond to the situation.
4. Assist students to be aware of the genre of the writing. The following questions might help them become aware of the genre.
  - a. What is the purpose of this genre?
  - b. What are the characteristics of this genre?
  - c. Who is the audience for this genre?
  - d. In what ways is this genre similar to and different from other text genres?
5. Make students aware of many genres.
6. Encourage students and provide opportunities for them to write a number of times.

Writing consultants should enable students to understand the goals of different types of writing in the writing center. Models collected from each department and strategies received from staff meetings and effective discussion about issues of genre in tutor training courses can provide a solid background to help create more productive and more effective consulting sessions along with creating a writing center staff that is aware of diverse genres. A genre-based approach strengthens writing center theory and practice and offers ways for tutors to help students foster their insights into developing appropriate, thoughtful and creative responses to academic writing assignments by

creating the best environment for the writers to learn the genres and writing texts of their fields.

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## Appendix

In a staff meeting of January 2010, I talked about genre theory and its implications within a writing center setting, and I provided the following handout to writing tutors, so they could consider the effectiveness of using genre theory in the EIU Writing Center.

1. Find out the writing situation. Make certain that students are conscious of the situation and how it affects the type of writing you expect.
2. Assist students in finding out how the writing is embedded in the situation of their course
3. Provide models so that students will be able to know how to interpret the writing task in relation to the situation. While reviewing the examples, focus not only on form but also other elements that respond to the situation.
4. Assist students to be aware of the genre of the writing. The following questions might help them become aware of the genre.
  - a. What is the purpose of this genre?
  - b. What are the characteristics of this genre?
  - c. Who is the audience for this genre?
  - d. In what ways is this genre similar to and different from other text genres?
5. Make students aware of many genres.
6. Encourage students and provide opportunities for them to write a number of times